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Second country cooperation framework for Gabon (2002-2006)

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Introduction

1. The Government of Gabon and the United Nations system have established, in close collaboration with other development partners, the common country assessment and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) in order to increase the impact of their cooperation on development. UNDAF for the period 2002-2006 is coordinated with the frameworks of the United Nations programmes, funds and specialized agencies represented in Gabon. The second country cooperation framework (CCF) for Gabon for the period 2002-2006 draws inspiration from the common country assessment, UNDAF, the 1999 national human development report and guidelines adopted by the Government, which are contained in various documents, including the national solidarity and development pact of the President of the Republic, the policy outline letter from the President of the Republic to the Prime Minister of February 1999 and the Prime Minister's general policy statement. A detailed work plan for the drafting of a poverty reduction strategy paper is due to be finalized in December 2001. However, it should be noted that Gabon is not eligible for the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative, since it is a middle-income country.

2. The development of the present CCF began with the mid-term review of the first CCF (1997-2001) in April 2000. The document was drawn up with reference to the conclusions of the review and the main themes that emerged from the common country assessment and UNDAF, which were finalized in August 2001. The reduction of absolute poverty will be the priority, with a focus on the following three issues: (a) while exploitation of Gabon's abundant natural resources provides the country with a substantial source of income this has not resulted in the hoped-for improvement in living conditions for the whole of the population; resource management and governance should therefore be improved; (b) unless the strategy developed to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS is implemented the country's development will be impeded; (c) since oil, the main natural resource, is not renewable, it is important to prepare for the post-oil period; Gabon's biodiversity (flora, forest, fauna), its second great resource, must be better managed so as to ensure its continuity. This would be an investment for future generations.

3. Following the example of the common country assessment and UNDAF, the process of preparing the CCF has been participatory and dynamic, involving the Government, civil society, the United Nations system and other development partners.

I. Development situation from a sustainable human development perspective

4. Gabon covers an area of 267,667 square kilometres and in 1999 had approximately 1.2 million inhabitants, with a population density of 4.5 inhabitants per square kilometre and an annual growth rate of 2.4 per cent; 8 per cent of the population is urban. According to the *Human Development Report 2001*, in 1999 it had a human development index of 0.617 and ranked 109th out of a total of 162 countries, right after South Africa among the mainland African countries south of the Sahara. In 1999, the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita expressed in purchasing power parity was $6,024. Economic growth, averaged 0.6 per cent a year in the period 1990-1999, not enough to produce the expected impact on the population's general welfare.

5. A review of the basic socio-economic indicators reveals the country's low level of human development compared to its economic performance. The net enrolment ratio is 86.3 per cent of all children irrespective of gender; 6 per cent of women and 8 per cent of men have not been to school. About 36 per cent of women and 24 per cent of men have a primary school education. Only 42 per cent of women and 38 per cent of men reach the lower level of secondary education, while 12 per cent of women and 20 per cent of men reach higher secondary education. 2.9 per cent of gross national product (GNP) is allocated to public spending on education. The country has high rates of maternal mortality (500 per 100,000 live births) and infant mortality (58 per 1,000). Only 70 per cent of households have access to drinking water.

6. Almost 20 per cent of the population of the largest cities, Libreville and Port-Gentil (about 70 per cent of the total population of Gabon is concentrated in these two cities), live below the absolute poverty line, which is estimated at about 29,000 CFA francs or $45 a month per person. Among the rural population, the incidence of absolute poverty is greater.

7. Despite the important initiatives undertaken recently, good governance still needs to be strengthened because shortcomings persist, in particular: (a) inadequate transparency and monitoring of the management of the State and public affairs in general; (b) the still-limited participation of civil society in the decision-making and implementation process; (c) insufficient participation of women in decision-making process.

8. The HIV/AIDS prevalence rate in 2001 is estimated at 7.7 per cent in urban areas; this has a negative impact on life expectancy at birth and on the GDP per capita growth. The rate of use of preventive means is very low: 9.4 per cent for women and 30 per cent for men.

9. Gabon has the second largest area of tropical rainforest (2 million square kilometres) after Amazonia. There are 22 million hectares of forest biomass; its flora (10,000 to 11,000 species) and fauna are unique and exceptionally rich and diversified. The country's environmental situation is characterized by enormous pressure from human activity (forestry and poaching) on natural resources and biological diversity.

10. To meet its development challenges, the Government has undertaken to prepare and implement a development strategy based on the prospective study "Gabon 2025", which focuses on two key elements: making Gabon (a) a model of participatory democracy and (b) a model of development based on high-quality human resources and an active private sector in a productive economy.

II. Results and lessons of past cooperation

11. The first UNDP country cooperation framework for Gabon (1997-2001) focused on two main areas: (a) national capacity-building, comprising four programmes: (i) strengthening management capacity in respect of economic and social policies; (ii) administrative reform; (iii) human resources development; (iv) formulation of a national environmental action plan; (b) stimulating and promoting participation in development, with four programmes: (i) programme of support for entrepreneurship; (ii) information and communication for development; (iii) women and development; (iv) full development of civil society.

12. The review of the CCF in April 2000 confirmed that the two focus areas were relevant to the Government's policies and programmes and to the recommendations of the world conferences. It underlined the relevance of UNDP activities, such as its support for policy and strategy formulation. Key results achieved with UNDP support include the preparation of a national environmental action plan, the publication of a national human development report in 1999, the establishment of the women's rights and equality monitoring agency, the formulation of a national plan of specific action for women and the completion of the Gabon 2025 prospective study.

13. Among the lessons learned from past cooperation is that adoption of a participatory approach when formulating and implementing projects and programmes guarantees their success and that national execution makes it possible to give nationals greater responsibility, to pay more attention to national priorities and makes it easier for UNDP to take action in sensitive areas such as governance, administrative reform and the formulation of development policies. The main recommendations of the review are as follows: that some processes already under way (administrative reform, economic and social management, information and communication for development, women and development and empowerment) should be consolidated and that action plans which have already been announced (environment and biodiversity) should be implemented.

III. Objectives, programme areas and expected results

14. As set out in UNDAF, the main objective of UNDP and United Nations system activities is to reduce the incidence of absolute poverty and specifically, in cities, to reduce the percentage of the population living below the poverty line from 20 per cent to less than 15 per cent by 2015.

(a) To achieve that objective, given that resources are limited, UNDP's role would be firstly, of facilitation, by encouraging the development of appropriate strategies and policies, strengthening local capacities and participation and advocacy, and, secondly, of mobilizing aid and support for the Government so as to strengthen its development management and coordination capacities.

(b) UNDP support, which aims to create a favourable environment for poverty reduction by improving governance, will be developed in cooperation with the country's various social groups, including civil society, and will be in perfect synergy with the activities of the country's other development partners, including the World Bank, the European Union, France, the African Development Bank, the other bodies in the United Nations system and bilateral partners. Systematic efforts will be made to pool resources in order to improve coordination.

The main expected result is the establishment of the agency to monitor poverty and sustainable human development. The latter will monitor and analyse the key indicators of the poverty reduction strategy and the Millennium Summit, disaggregated by gender and province.

15. In the light of lessons learned from past cooperation and on the basis of the common country assessment and the main themes of UNDAF, UNDP will focus, during the period 2002-2006, on three areas: (a) governance; (b) the fight against HIV/AIDS; and (c) the environment. Each of these areas contributes directly to the overall objective of poverty reduction in one of the areas in which UNDP has expertise and comparative advantages.

16. With regard to advocacy, UNDP will support the preparation of an annual national human development report, which will be based on the findings of the agency monitoring poverty and sustainable human development and that monitoring for women's rights and equality.

A. Governance

17. The aim is to strengthen key institutions for the management of public affairs; empower the population, particularly in rural areas; improve access for the poor to basic services, information and communication and the funding available from private and State institutions; and bring the concept of gender into general usage, in particular by systematically incorporating it into all projects and programmes under the present country cooperation framework.

18. UNDP will contribute to strengthening management capacity in the Ministry of Planning, Development Programming and Land Use, particularly in the field of economic management (programme under way) and participatory development planning. The expected results are tools for participatory development planning created and/or improved upon for the provinces of Moyen-Ogooué and Ogooué-Ivindo.

19. Despite the low level of its financial contribution, UNDP is informally the leading sponsor of the programme of administrative reform, which is one of the Government's priorities, and which has, since its inception, been largely funded by the Government. UNDP acts as a catalyst in various areas and focuses on developing concepts and approaches; this process began as part of the first country cooperation framework. The expected results, some of which have already been partially achieved, are: standardization of public services and establishment of organizational frameworks; modernization of management procedures and of human resources development in administration, and adjustment of regulations; inclusion of a sociocultural dimension in the modernization of State services and consideration of the opinions of service users; modernization of the wage mechanism and establishment of public expenditure programming tools; decentralization and devolution.

20. The Government is engaged in a process of decentralization pursuant to organic law No. 15/96 of 6 June 1996 relating to decentralization. This process was intended to enable citizens to take part in decision-making at grass-roots level by improving the consultation machinery in the provinces and ensuring that they participate in decision-making at local level. The national programme for decentralized rural development currently being drawn up fits into this framework. In that context, UNDP will support the empowerment of the population at decision-making level. At least five frameworks for provincial consultation/coordination (bringing together government and civil society, including women's associations, the private sector and representatives of the people) will be brought into operation.

21. In order to empower the population, the Government is aiming to broaden access for the poor, and particularly women, to financial and natural resources through participatory management activities. Jointly with other partners such as Canada, Shell and Elf Gabon, UNDP will support decentralized financial systems and self-employment and encourage private initiatives. This support is designed (a) to expand financial services to meet the needs of the most

disadvantaged (women and young people); and (b) to provide technical and financial assistance to credit institutions at grass-roots level. The expected results are: (i) improved living conditions and increased income for local people, particularly women, in at least 100 villages; (ii) an increase in the range of financial products through the creation and maintenance of about 10 credit and savings banks, including five for women, and the establishment of technical branches to monitor operations closely. It is expected that at least 2,000 people, two thirds of whom will be women, will have greater access to credit; (iii) the creation or support of at least 40 microbusinesses and small businesses each year, the majority of which will be managed by women or young people.

22. Using as a basis the national information and communication strategy developed under the first country cooperation framework, UNDP will help the Government set up its national programme for the development of new information and communication technologies. UNDP's support is intended to ensure that the rural population is better informed and educated. New technologies will also be promoted as a cross-sectoral theme.

B. HIV/AIDS

23. The objectives are the implementation, monitoring and participatory evaluation of policies and strategies for limiting the spread of HIV/AIDS and the gradual reduction of its impact.

24. UNDP will help improve advocacy, strategic planning capacity and coordination of activities to combat HIV/AIDS through action aimed at the Government, associations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in this field. The expected results are: (a) better knowledge of the socio-economic impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic; (b) implementation of the strategy to combat the pandemic for the period 2001-2005; (c) institutional capacity-building, particularly in relation to the national programme to combat HIV/AIDS and associations and NGOs, so as to coordinate, mobilize and manage resources in the fight against HIV/AIDS; (d) a fresh impetus to the mechanisms for consultation among the various partners through the enlarged Theme Group.

25. The fight against HIV/AIDS will also be promoted as a cross-sectoral theme in the various programmes and projects funded by UNDP and will be the subject of joint multi-donor programmes concerning epidemiology, the socio-economic impact on households, community action aimed at young people and women in particular, mother-to-child transmission and care of orphans in conjunction with UNFPA and UNICEF, care of the sick, and the programme for the purchase of antiretroviral medication, for which the Government has set up a solidarity fund with an annual budget allocation of approximately $1.5 million. The expected result of all these activities is a reduction of at least 25 per cent in the number of new cases.

C. Environment

26. In this field, UNDP has given its support by implementing the national environmental management programme and formulating national strategies centred on sustainable development, specifically in the fields of biodiversity and climate change, with the assistance of the Global Environment Facility. The aim is, firstly, to support the sectoral implementation of these strategies, following the example of the forest programme already under way, so as to prevent and repair damage to environmental resources and, secondly, to contribute to national capacity-building in order to improve environmental governance.

27. The forest ecosystems in the countries of Central Africa or the Congo Basin are similar and regional cooperation on the management of cross-border natural resources therefore needs to be improved. Efforts will be made to improve the circulation of information relating to data and programmes under way, coordinate policies and standardize laws. Regional cooperation on operational matters will be stepped up. The rich biodiversity in the cross-border area of Minkebe (Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Cameroon) will be protected through community management of natural resources and local capacity-building for the planning and management of protected areas.

IV. Management arrangements

Implementation arrangements

28. As is already the case, national execution of projects and programmes will be the main form of implementation.

29. A gradual shift is envisaged towards joint United Nations system projects and programmes, or at least projects with a high degree of coordination and cooperation. In some cases, this approach will be expanded and will become joint multi-donor assistance, following the model of the programme to combat HIV/AIDS and the programme of support for administrative reform.

30. Advocacy will be an integral part of the support given by UNDP in order to achieve the objectives of the national programmes. Dialogue on policies will continue, particularly on the subjects of HIV/AIDS and governance.

Resource mobilization

31. To implement this cooperation programme with Gabon, UNDP will use its internal resources — the targets for resource assignment from the core (TRAC) the Global Environment Facility, the Montreal Protocol, Capacity 21, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the Africa 2000 Network, the United Nations Fund for International Partnerships and the Tokyo International Conference on African Development — and also additional funding from the Government and bilateral and multilateral partners. Partnerships with civil society and the private sector will be enhanced.

Monitoring and evaluation

32. The present country cooperation framework will be monitored and evaluated in conjunction with the Government and other development partners and also within the United Nations system. The impact of the country cooperation framework will be measured by the monitoring agency for poverty and sustainable human development, using indicators jointly agreed upon to monitor the poverty reduction strategy and UNDAF. Progress will be noted at the annual review of the country cooperation framework and recorded in the annual results-based report. This process will also provide input for the annual review of UNDAF.

Annex

Resource mobilization target table for Gabon (2002-2006)

Source	*Amount (In thousands of United States dollars)*	*Comments*
UNDP regular resources		
Estimated carry-over	149	Includes AOS.
TRAC 1.1.1	256	Assigned immediately to country.
TRAC 1.1.2	0 to 66.7 per cent of TRAC 1.1.1	This range of percentages is presented for initial planning purposes only. The actual assignment will depend on the availability of high-quality programmes. Any increase in the range of percentages would also be subject to availability of resources.
SPPD/STS	154	
Subtotal	**559**[a]	
UNDP other resources		
Government cost-sharing	4 000	
Third-party cost-sharing	1 000	
Funds, trust funds and other	18 550	
	of which:	
UNIFEM	5	
UNV	45	
GEF/Capacity 21, Montreal Protocol	18 500	
Subtotal	**23 550**	
Grand total	**24 109**[a]	

[a] Not inclusive of TRAC 1.1.2, which is allocated regionally for subsequent country application.

Abbreviations: AOS = administrative and operational services; GEF = Global Environment Facility; SPPD = support for policy and programme development; STS = support for technical services; TRAC = target for resource assignment from the core; UNIFEM = United Nations Development Fund for Women; UNV = United Nations Volunteers.